

**Statement
of**

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**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies**

**Hearing on P-16 Education Systems
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Joseph Tomain and I am Chairman of the Board of KnowledgeWorks Foundation and Dean of the University of Cincinnati College of Law in Cincinnati, Ohio. Today I will share with you the work of our Foundation, how it ties into P-16 initiatives, the benefits and challenges of P-16 systems and the structures and resources that make Ohio the ideal state to pilot such a system. KnowledgeWorks Foundation believes that with P-16 systems of education, we can truly give all students the opportunity to attend college and learn essential life skills.

KnowledgeWorks Foundation, the only statewide foundation in Ohio dedicated to improving education, is an operating foundation with about \$200 million in assets. We provide funding and leadership for education initiatives throughout the state, focused on removing barriers to quality education.

The Foundation seeks to achieve measurable, sustainable, and systemic improvements in the success of students, public schools, and communities, leading ultimately to improved economic and social conditions throughout the state of Ohio and beyond. Through our work and our theory of change we strive to create Champions of Change who are empowered most directly through our work to drive change in Ohio's schools, communities, and policy environment.

KnowledgeWorks Foundation has three major program areas: College & Career Access; School Improvement; and Communities & School Facilities, but it is our cross-system work that enables the most sustainable systemic improvements in education. The concept of P-16 education systems fits within this cross-system area of the Foundation's work as it bridges all three of our program areas – especially the work we have been involved in around college access, school reform, and community engagement.

We are engaged in several key initiatives including [1] the implementation of comprehensive urban school reform through the Ohio High School Transformation Initiative and Project GRAD; [2] creating partnerships between community colleges, workforce development institutions and the business community to serve as a resource for the education and training of Ohio's low-wage workers through the Ohio Bridges to Opportunity Initiative and [3] creating new high schools which bridge secondary and postsecondary learning by partnering a high school with a postsecondary institution and engaging students in rigorous learning opportunities, through the Ohio Early College Initiative, which seeks to create a seamless transition from high school to college. We are partnering with other major Foundations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation and Kellogg Foundation throughout all of this work.

KnowledgeWorks Foundation helped create the Ohio College Access Network, the first statewide Network of community-based college access programs. These programs help students and families overcome barriers to postsecondary education, including cost and lack of information, by providing hands-on guidance and financial support. The success of the Ohio College Access Network, which, in three years, has grown from serving 11 to 33 Ohio communities and more than 135,000 students overall, has resulted in a national expansion of these college access programs through the National College Access Network.

As you can see, KnowledgeWorks Foundation works directly with schools and higher education institutions. We see first-hand the silos created by different education “systems” leading to the disconnect between secondary and higher education. This brings me to what I am here to talk about today—P-16 Education Systems. The overarching theme of KnowledgeWorks Foundation’s work is about creating systemic change. The concept of P-16 helps us see more clearly the imperative of what we are already doing and allows us to further the goals of alignment and smooth transitions, leading to systems change along the education pipeline.

Let me begin by telling you a quick story about a student I will call Eric. He was a middle of the road student at a Cleveland high school, with every intention of going to college. He took several college prep courses in high school, scored well on his proficiency tests, passed the Ohio graduation test and had an average ACT score. He was admitted to a state university and would be the first in his family to go to college. Summer orientation came and Eric was asked to take the university’s placement exams in the areas of Math, English and Science. He did not pass these tests and was told to enroll in remedial courses that quarter. When Eric, already struggling to find a way to pay for college, learned that he would need to take and pay for courses that would not even count toward his degree, he began to doubt that college really was for him. He never started school that fall. His dream of a college education was shattered.

Stories like Eric’s are not uncommon. Barriers such as low educational standards, lack of an integrated curriculum, low expectations and unmet financial need continue to undermine college opportunity, not only in Ohio, but nationally. The Stanford University Bridge Project, a national study, found that while America’s high school students have higher aspirations than ever before, with 88 percent of eighth graders expecting to go on to college, the current fractured system of education is keeping many of these students from reaching their educational goals. For example, while 72 percent of these students will go on to college, only 47 percent of them will have completed a college preparatory curriculum. We know that more than half of all college students take remedial courses and that the college completion rate for students who take these courses is much lower than students who do not require remedial coursework.

Consistent with these statistics, the U.S. Department of Education found that the single biggest predictor of college success is the quality and intensity of the high school curriculum. But we cannot put blame solely on the high schools. How often do colleges communicate to the high schools what they expect of students or what it takes to succeed at their institutions?

We must do a better job of aligning standards and curriculum and making sure that the knowledge and skills high school students are required to know and master for high school graduation are the same skills and knowledge required for admission and success in college. Better aligning high school exit requirements with the expectations of colleges and employers is a powerful lever that states can use to optimize their education systems.

Several states and communities, some of whom you will hear from today have recognized that aligning disconnected, basically independent education organizations is a means of producing better results. Such alignment takes place through the reorganization into P-16 initiatives – Pre-school through grade 16 (four years of college). P-16 systems are being established to improve college access and help prepare students for the new knowledge economy. These initiatives seek

to include all students, providing them with an opportunity for college and better life skills. When these systems are effective, beneficiaries include students, the broader community, and the economy.

The creation of a P-16 system is a means of achieving the goal of aligning the diverse parts of the “education pipeline.” Alignment is sought in standards, quality of teaching, testing and college admission practices. P-16 reflects the belief, as previously stated, that the single largest obstacle to students going on to college is poor academic preparation. Poor preparation often reflects and creates low expectations. Alignment establishes college readiness as a goal for all students. But this alignment can only be achieved if the right people are at the table.

The biggest challenge of P-16 integration is its very premise – alignment must occur in order to have impact. Current levels of education are not used to working with one another. In order for P-16 thinking to really work, it often requires a cultural shift at the state level. It requires a shared belief that every child can and should graduate from high school college ready. It also requires the creation of governance mechanisms that improve secondary and postsecondary alignment of goals, planning and budgets. In order to move toward achieving any of these goals, stakeholders from the business and policy-making community must be engaged, truly embrace P-16 thinking, and be willing to work toward real systemic change at both the state and local levels.

While the P-16 terminology may be relatively new, the concept, in theory, has been around for many years. Those states with the most success, such as Georgia and Kentucky, have been those thinking P-16 at both the state and local levels. At the state level, for example, we believe that a P-16 organization must engage membership from both the public and private sector and include leadership from the department of education, state higher education organization, legislative and executive branches of government, the philanthropic community, the business community, and other relative stakeholders depending on the needs of that particular state. At the local level, P-16 councils must be reflective of the membership and core principles of the state entity in order to reinforce this P-16 thinking at the grassroots level.

In Ohio, we are lucky to have one of the nation’s finest local P-16 efforts right in our own backyard, and in your own district, Mr. Chairman. The Stark County P-16 Compact has created a model for developing local P-16 efforts, working to align standards, research current local workforce trends and eliminate barriers to postsecondary education. This Compact promises to have great influence as Ohio looks toward building a statewide model of P-16 thinking and structure.

We believe that in Ohio we can start at the grassroots level, building upon the best practices of the Stark County P-16 Compact and KnowledgeWorks Foundation’s experience in engaging communities and creating sustainable partnerships. Much like our work with the Ohio College Access Network, we believe that building successful local P-16 efforts in communities across Ohio will fuel change at the state level. We are currently working with OCAN and the Ohio Board of Regents to help create a student tracking database which will follow students from high school into postsecondary. One day we hope to expand this database to include the elementary

level, as well. We will use this data at the local and state levels to engage powerful groups of stakeholders in this effort to prove that higher education can fuel Ohio's economic growth.

Ohio has the systems in place to pilot a truly comprehensive P-16 system at both the state and local levels. KnowledgeWorks Foundation will use infrastructure already in place through the Ohio College Access Network, a best-practice model in the Stark P-16 Compact, as well as the comprehensive urban school reform and school redesign efforts throughout the State to work to build a comprehensive system that can potentially serve as a model for other states planning to engage in this work.

This work is not easy as we have learned first-hand through our experiences with the Ohio Early College Network, where the Dayton Early College Academy opened this fall. This high school/university partnership represents collaboration between Dayton Public Schools and the University of Dayton. At an Early College High School, such as the Dayton Early College Academy, high school students have the opportunity to complete college level work while in secondary school. This reduces college costs and introduces students to rigorous college academics while in high school. Essentially, this is a public/private partnership bridging the secondary and postsecondary systems and challenging students who might not have otherwise gone to college to achieve at levels at which they never dreamed they would achieve. Early College is an incredible opportunity with the potential to greatly impact how we think about the education pipeline. Still, differences ranging from funding streams to organizational cultures have forced different levels of education into silos and created barriers for this work along the way. The biggest challenge of P-16 integration is breaking down these walls and working toward alignment and integration.

Congress has an opportunity to support this important, yet challenging P-16 work in Ohio and other states, through the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Options that could be considered include:

- Continuing to support and strengthen the GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) program by adding a component that engages secondary and postsecondary programs, as well as the broader community, in partnerships to strengthen the alignment and transition between high school and college.
- Encouraging states to improve P-16 Articulation. Such a program would make support available for one of two purposes:
 - the promotion of collaboration and alignment between state secondary and postsecondary agencies;
 - the support of local, community efforts to engage broad groups of stakeholders in the formation of local P-16 councils to reinforce state P-16 goals.

Eligible entities for these programs should be partnerships comprised of leaders in the areas of P-12 and higher education, business and civic leaders, State governors and others with expertise in issues pertaining to P-16 alignment.

In the end, P-16 educational systems operate under the assumption that even the earliest educational experiences are relevant to the goal of college access. KnowledgeWorks Foundation

shares this assumption and we will continue to work to achieve the goal of college readiness and opportunity for all.

Thank you for the opportunity today to discuss the need for P-16 thinking in Ohio and across the nation. KnowledgeWorks Foundation is committed to helping all Ohioans and Americans achieve the dream of a college education. At the appropriate time, I would be pleased to answer your questions about the idea of P-16 education and KnowledgeWorks Foundation's work in Ohio.

Thank you.